



ERNS and Oil Update

Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS) Fact Sheet

Office of Emergency and Remedial Response
Oil Program Center 5203G

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

What is ERNS?

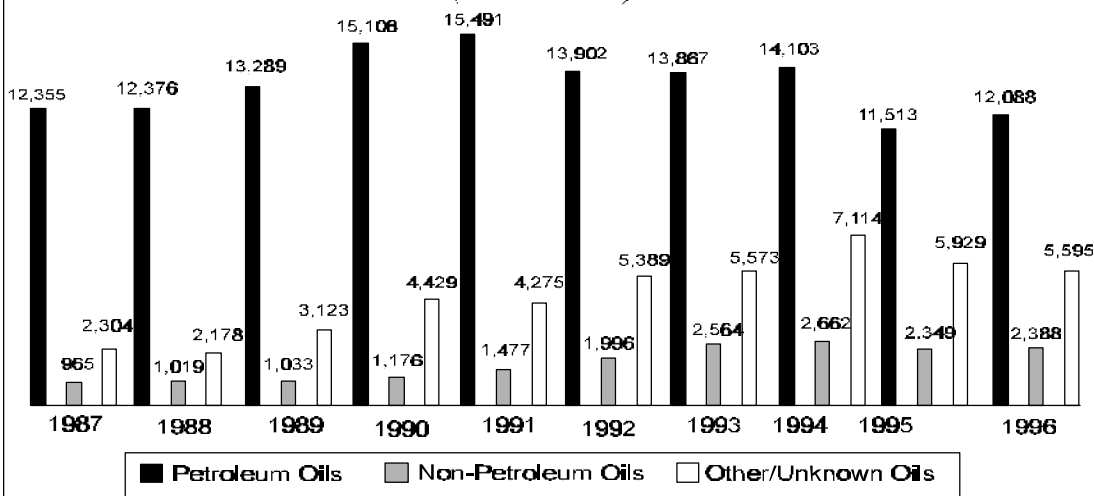
The Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS) is a database of initial notifications of releases of oil and hazardous substances that have occurred throughout the United States and have been reported to the National Response Center (NRC) or any of the ten EPA Regions. The initial notification data may be updated with information from various Federal, State, and local response authorities as appropriate. ERNS data can be used to analyze release notifications, support emergency planning efforts, and assist decision makers in developing spill prevention programs.

Oil Release Notifications in ERNS

Most people think of oil spills as spills involving petroleum. However, spills of non-petroleum oils (including animal and vegetable oils), which can also be harmful to the environment, must also be reported to the NRC. In the graphic below, release reports have been divided between petroleum products, non-petroleum products, and releases where the specific type of oil was unknown. Between 1987 and 1996, approximately 58% of the over 340,000 release notifications in ERNS are reports of oil spills, with petroleum products comprising the majority (68% of oil spills), and animal and vegetable oils accounting for a small percentage of oil spills of known material. The following are examples of petroleum, non-petroleum, and animal and vegetable oils:

Petroleum Oils	Animal and Vegetable Oils	Other Non-Petroleum Oils	Other/Unknown Oils
Crude Oil	Corn Oil	Coal Tar	Oil Slick
Heating Oil	Lard	Anthracene Oil	Odor of Oil
Jet Fuel	Tall Oil	Coal Tar Pitch	
Kerosene	Olive Oil	Creosote	
Auto Gasoline	Tallow		

Petroleum, Non-Petroleum, and Unknown Oil Reports (1987-1996)

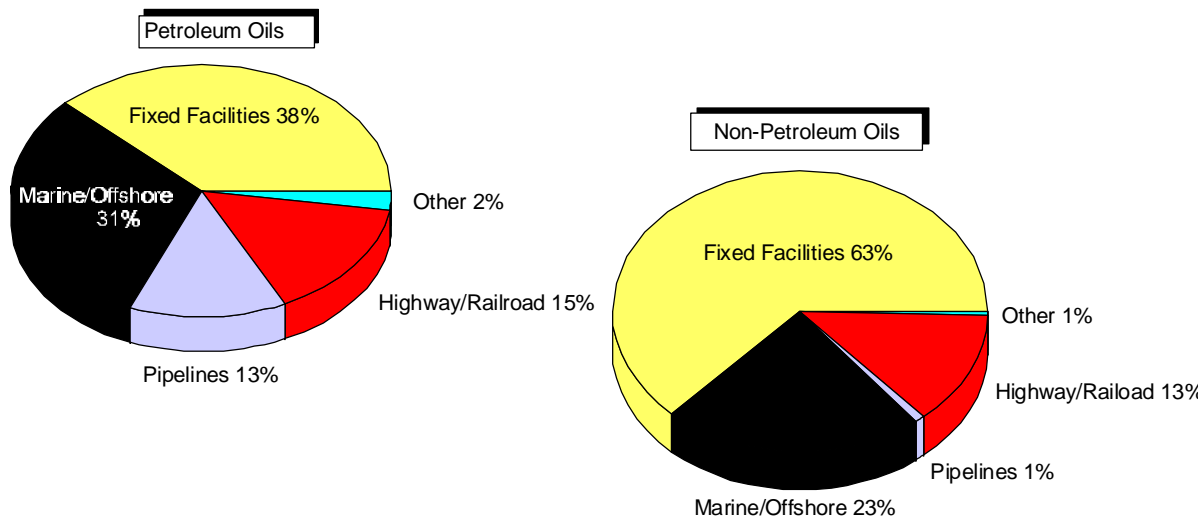


Note: Petroleum, non-petroleum, and unknown oil reports are not necessarily additive. A single report may contain spills of multiple substances.

Origins of Oil Releases Reported in ERNS

The following graphics show the distribution of spill sources for both petroleum and non-petroleum (including animal and vegetable) spill notifications in ERNS. Information about the origin of the release can be used for oil spill planning and prevention purposes.

Petroleum and Non-Petroleum Oil Reports By Release Origin (1987-1996)



When do I Report a Release of Oil?

The NRC must be notified of discharges of oil affecting U.S. waters in accordance with the regulations issued under the Clean Water Act. These regulations require the person in charge of a facility or vessel to notify the NRC of a discharge that:

- ✎ Causes a sheen to appear on the surface of the water or adjoining shoreline;
- ✎ Violates applicable water quality standards; or
- ✎ Causes a sludge or an emulsion to be deposited beneath the surface of the water or upon the adjoining shoreline.



When in doubt, call the NRC!
1-800-424-8802

Obtaining ERNS Data

Additional information on the ERNS database may be obtained by calling the ERNS Information Line at (202) 260-2342, by sending an e-mail request to ems.info@epamail.epa.gov, or by writing to EPA at the following address:



ERNS Manager
U.S. EPA
Mail Code 5203G
401 M Street SW
Washington, DC 20460



ERNS data are also available through the Internet at the following addresses:

World Wide Web: <http://www.epa.gov/ERNS>
Anonymous FTP Server: <ftp.epa.gov>